

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2003

EA03-26

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**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Urges Public
to Review New Special Rules for Midwestern Gray Wolves**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is changing the status of the gray wolf from endangered to threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in most of the lower 48 states, and with that change comes greater flexibility in managing these recovering wolf populations. The Service is encouraging landowners and others who live in areas inhabited by wolves to become familiar with new rules now in effect for gray wolves. New regulations that now apply to wolves in the Midwest and Eastern states are very different from the new regulations for Western wolves.

The Service has established three Distinct Population Segments for the gray wolf. Wolves in the Eastern DPS – Midwestern and Northeastern states – are now listed as threatened, including those in Michigan, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Wolves in Minnesota have been listed as threatened since 1978. Threatened wolves are still protected by the Endangered Species Act, and Federal penalties still apply to illegally killing or harming threatened wolves. However, under new special ESA rules, threatened wolves may be killed under certain circumstances. In the Midwestern states where wolf populations are newly reclassified to threatened (including Wisconsin, Michigan, North Dakota and South Dakota), provisions of the new special rule include:

- C State and Tribal natural resource agencies can kill wolves that have killed or attacked domesticated animals, if there is a likelihood of such repeated depredations.
- C Tribes can salvage dead wolves on reservations for traditional cultural use without a Federal permit.
- C The new regulations DO NOT ALLOW private citizens in the Midwest and Eastern U.S. to kill or harm wolves that are attacking livestock or other domesticated animals.

A very similar, pre-existing special regulation for depredation control remains in effect for Minnesota wolves. These new provisions do not apply to the Northeastern states.

“We want to be sure that people in the Midwest and East understand these new rules, which differ from the rules that are also going into effect in western states,” said Service wildlife biologist Ron Refsnider. “Out west, there are some circumstances under which private landowners may kill wolves that are attacking domesticated animals. Here in the Midwest and East, the new rules specify that only agents of state and tribal natural resource agencies may do so.”

The Endangered Species Act allows anyone to kill any endangered or threatened wolf in self-defense or to defend the life of another person. In addition, any State or Tribal wildlife

management agency, or any Federal land management agency can kill a wolf that is a clear, but non-immediate threat to human safety. These provisions continue to apply now that wolves are listed as threatened.

If you are having problems or expect problems from wolves, use the numbers below to contact U.S.D.A. APHIS/Wildlife Services, the State natural resources agency, or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for help. If on Tribal land, the appropriate Tribal agency should be contacted.

To report wolves that are killing livestock or are behaving aggressively contact:

Michigan - Department of Natural
Resources 1-800-292-
7800

Minnesota - USDA/APHIS/Wildlife
Services 218-327-
3350

U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Service
612-725-3548

Wisconsin - Department of Natural
Resources 715-762-
4684 ext.107

For more information on the Eastern Gray Wolf DPS, dealing with depredating wolves, state wolf management plans, or for links to information for other wolf recovery programs, go to: <http://midwest.fws.gov/wolf>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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